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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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HQ USAF FOR X0XX
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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. U.S.-Israel Relations

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post quoted a senior Israeli diplomatic source as saying yesterday that U.S. Middle East envoy George Mitchell is well aware that the Netanyahu government has not approved any new

building starts in the West Bank since taking office on March 31. According to the newspaper, the source was signaling that a de facto settlement freeze has already been in effect for more than four months. The Jerusalem Post also quoted some right-wing ministers as saying any construction freeze must be brought to the cabinet for a decision. Media cited an announcement by the PMQs bureau that no agreement has been reached on a cessation of construction projects.

Leading media reported that yesterday President Obama told reporters during his meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak: QThere has been movement in the right direction.Q The President was referring to reports that Israel has stopped approving new construction in the West Bank, as well as to the growth of the Palestinian economy and improvement in security. President Obama was quoted as saying: "All of this is creating a climate in which it's possible for us to see some positive steps and hopefully negotiate towards a final resolution of these longstanding issues. It's going to require a lot of hard work, and the United States is committed to being a partner in this process." Mubarak said: QWe are speaking in a good manner and we are moving into the right direction," though he stressed that it was essential for talks between Israelis and Palestinians to begin. "If negotiations start, this will lead to the Arab states to support the peace process and to move it forward, because I can tell you that the Arab people are fed up with the length that this issue has taken, and the issue of the displaced people," he said. "So I believe if the two parties sit down, this will lead to have Arab states support moving the peace process forward." The Jerusalem Post noted that Mubarak's comments contradict the Obama administration's insistence that Arab nations, as well as Israelis and Palestinians take steps from the outset to help create conditions for productive negotiations to occur. Leading media quoted a spokesman for President Mubarak as saying that President Obama that he intends to present his Middle East peace plan next week. Media quoted White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs as saying: QI do not know of any specific plan that the United States will present at that time.Q Maariv quoted diplomatic sources in Jerusalem as saying that President Obama is examining the possibility of holding a three-way summit meeting in New York in September with PM Benjamin Netanyahu and PA President Mahmoud Abbas.

HaQaretz reported that senior Western diplomats and Israeli officials told the newspaper that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is hiding data on Iran's drive to obtain nuclear arms. The sources were quoted as saying that the IAEA under Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei was refraining from publishing evidence obtained by the organization's inspectors over the past few months that indicate Iran was pursuing information about weaponization efforts and a military nuclear program. ElBaradei, who will soon vacate his post, has said that the agency does not have any evidence that suggests Iran is developing a nuclear weapon. But the sources told HaQaretz that the new evidence was submitted to the IAEA in a classified annex written by its inspectors in the Islamic Republic. The report was said to have been signed by the head of the IAEA team in Iran. The classified report, according to the sources, was not incorporated into the agency's published reports. The details, they said, were censored by senior IAEA officials at the organization's Vienna headquarters.

All media reported that yesterday the Israeli Foreign Ministry responded angrily to a story in Sweden's largest circulation daily, Aftonbladet, that accused IDF soldiers of abducting Palestinians to steal their organs, saying this was a grotesque throwback to the blood libels of the Middle Ages. Israel's embassy in Stockholm is expected to issue a sharp denunciation today. In the story, headlined "They plunder the organs of our sons," and accompanied by a gruesome photograph, Palestinians are quoted as saying IDF soldiers kidnapped their sons and stole organs. The article makes reference to the recent arrests in New Jersey of several U.S. Jews, including rabbis, for a number of alleged crimes, including brokering the sale of organs for transplant.

Major media reported that yesterday Russian President Dmitry Medvedev promised President Shimon Peres that Russia will review a decision to sell Iran S-300 anti-aircraft missiles. Peres told his Russian counterpart that an Iranian nuclear weapon would be a "flying death camp." The two leaders met in the Russian President's summer residence in the Black Sea town of Sochi. Medvedev also

noted that Russia opposed selling weapons that violate the "delicate Middle East balance", and that it had no intention of changing this policy. Medvedev also referred to negotiations between Israel and Syria, saying he believed Syrian President Bashar Assad was ready for direct peace talks with Israel. Peres responded that Israel is ready to engage in direct talks with Syria without preconditions, so long as Damascus stops supporting Palestinian terrorist organizations and Hizbullah. Peres also slammed the denial of the Holocaust by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as a disgrace for the entire Iranian people. Peres was also quoted as saying that although Ahmadinejad had on several occasions denied the mass murder of European Jews by the Nazis, the Israeli leader had hopes for peace between Israel and Iran.

Maariv reported that Iran has lodged a complaint with Turkey about recent joint U.S.-Israel-Turkey naval maneuvers in the Mediterranean.

HaQaretz quoted Brig. Gen. Noam Tibon, the commander of the IDFQs Judea and Samaria [West Bank] division, as saying in a memo he wrote three months ago that using IDF soldiers to enforce law among the Jewish population in the territories, especially during the evacuation of illegal outposts, might lead soldiers and even commanders to refuse orders. The memo, distributed to commanders of units operating in the West Bank, states that every unit might have a "bottom third of soldiers and commanders with difficulties," who would require "individual follow-up and conversations." The memo calls on battalion and company commanders to draw "clear red lines" regarding refusing orders. The document also suggests commanders not assign soldiers connected to outpost residents to evacuations, calling for "a sensitive policy toward commanders or soldiers with family or social relationships in the evacuated population."

Media quoted visiting former U.S. presidential candidate Mike Huckabee as saying yesterday that the two-state concept is Qunrealistic.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday the liberal Jewish lobby J Street, which defines itself as a Qpro-Israel, pro-peace organization, announced that it would be launching field operations around the U.S. to encourage grassroots activists to become involved in shaping local debates on Israel and U.S. Middle East policy.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency launched a fundraising appeal this week, asking for \$181 million for humanitarian relief in Gaza ahead of Ramadan, which begins in four days.

HaQaretz, Maariv, and The Jerusalem Post reported that Israeli scientists from the Weizmann Institute have demonstrated that DNA from blood and saliva samples used to incriminate or exonerate suspects can be faked.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Israeli political right is mounting a lat-minute attack to prevent the election of Qleftist Supreme Court candidates.

The Jerusalem Post quoted the Association for Civil Rights in Israel as saying that the sate has demolished some 130 hoses in unrecognized Israeli Bedouin communities since 1967.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Ben-Gurion-University scientists have been working with colleagues from the Hashemite University of Jordan and the University of Colorado at Boulder on desalination projects.

Major media reported that billionaire Lev LevievQs Africa-Israel Company, an international holding and investments group with extensive interests in the fields of real estate, construction and infrastructure, energy, and other related industries, will post a 1.4 billion-shekel (around \$350 million) loss for the second quarter of 2009.

1. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

I. "Cause for Concern"

Veteran journalist and television anchor Dan Margalit wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (8/19): QHolocaust deniers are out, anti-Semites and Jew-haters are in. The most popular newspaper in Sweden, Aftonbladet, carried a huge article saying that IDF soldiers kill Palestinians and then trade in their organs. How much time will pass until [far-left HaQaretz Palestinian affairs correspondent] Amira Hass and her friends demand an unbiased inquiry under U.N. sponsorship?.... Sweden has never been friendly toward the state of the Jews, ever since its neutrality in World War II and up to Folke BernadotteQs attempt to rip the Negev away from Israel. The Hungarian-Swedish Jew-saver Raul Wallenberg was the exception, not the rule. But the phenomenon, which is liable to develop in bad directions, is not limited solely to Scandinavia. Right now these outbursts of hatred appear marginal, as lacking significance, as non-credible -- just as Holocaust denial seemed at the beginning until it became a major problem. There is good reason to be concerned. There are good reasons to wage a war to the end against anti-Semitism, while it is still small.

II. "Thinking outside the QPR BubbleQ"

Columnist Michael Freund, who was an assistant to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his first term in office, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (8/19): QContrary to conventional wisdom, Israel is doing quite well in American public opinion. Even with the regularly-scheduled bombardments directed against its image, support for the Jewish state has proven to be fairly inelastic and durable among wide swathes of the American populace. Obviously, this does not mean that Israel and its supporters can rest on our laurels, kick back and relax. There is still plenty of work to be done in terms of rebranding Israel's image so that it is not constantly associated with war, conflict and turmoil. But it does underline an important point: most of us live in a hasbara [public relations] bubble, where we are so consumed by the minutiae of each and every event and how it is reported or distorted that we often lose sight of the forest for the trees.... At the end of the day, what really counts is the Qbig picture,Q the themes and narratives that take hold in the public's mind when (and even if) they think about the Jewish state. It is there that Israel and its supporters need to devote more of their time and energy. So letQs start focusing a little less on yesterdayQs Washington Post, and more on how to position Israel and improve her brand name in the future.

III. "FatahQs Gauntlet"

Far-left Palestinian affairs correspondent Amira Hass wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (8/19): QIt is only natural that people subject to foreign domination seek other means of achieving independence in the spectrum between armed struggle and peace talks. Therefore, it is logical that Fatah declared at its congress that it is not giving up other legitimate forms of struggle (boycotts, acts of popular resistance against the settlements) alongside the negotiations. The question this begs is whether this can become more than mere words.... Neither the Palestinian Authority, which is an institution concerned with maintaining its existence, nor Fatah, which is concerned with maintaining its huge achievement, have dared to expand the popular protests against the separation fence, of which they boast, into a real popular revolt.... The schizophrenia of being both a government and a liberation movement (as it defines itself) is one of Fatah's most salient characteristics. Can Fatah, which sees the PA as a huge achievement, manage to pick up the gauntlet of popular resistance that it itself threw down?

IV. "When the Left Strays Too Far from the Center"

Former Ambassador to the U.S., former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Minister of Defense Moshe Arens wrote in Ha'aretz (8/19): QWhat happened to the Labor Party? For many years it was the major political organization in Israel, and in later years one of the country's two large parties. But now it is a shrunken wreck of a party. The answer to this question lies in the old maxim about politics in democratic countries -- don't stray too far from the political center.... The Labor Party has moved too far left to

remain a serious contender in Israeli elections.... It is interesting how quickly the Republicans recognized the need to reposition themselves after the Goldwater defeat, as did the Democrats after the McGovern defeat. These are the political reflexes that are needed to succeed in politics. The Labor Party seems to lack these reflexes. What is needed, in addition to ideology, is a realization that the voter may be right after all, and that without his or her support, one cannot succeed in politics. Nature abhors a vacuum. And into the political vacuum created by the shrinking of Labor jumped the new Kadima party, cannibalizing much of what was left of Labor.... Whether [Kadima] will succeed in making a permanent place for itself on the political scene is still open to debate. But here lies the opportunity for a revival of the Labor Party. Unless they can move toward the center, they will continue on the path toward the scrap heap.

IV. QA Black Flag

Zuhair Andrawus, Editor-in-Chief of the Arabic-language Ma'a al-Hadath, wrote in Maariv (8/19): QThe day is not far off when Israel will demand to carry out the following equation: the settlers for the Palestinians in Israel [i.e. the Israeli Arabs]. The rift between the Jewish state and the Palestinians in Israel is growing larger. Therefore, the Palestinians in Israel must take immediate steps within Israeli law in order to prevent a second Nakba and move from a passive to an active state. In 1981 the prime minister at the time, Menachem Begin, gave order to prevent the Palestinians from holding an Arab conference in Israel for QsecurityQ reasons. Now our leaders have a national and moral responsibility to hold the conference in order to launch our struggle against the policy of the racist government. The conference must determine new tools for the struggle such as civil disobedience, which the American philosopher John Rawls described as public, nonviolent, conscientious activity that is usually carried out in order to bring about a change in the law or in government policy.

12. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Block Quotes:

QIntellectual Terrorism

Columnist and former IDF Intelligence chief Shlomo Gazit wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (8/19): QThree recommendations were made [in the wake of Israeli intelligenceQs mistakes at the time of the Yom Kippur War]: 1) Intellectual modesty: Never present your assessments and policy as God-given truths. DonQt block; donQt prevent a different thought and the presentations of a different view. 2) Encourage pluralism; persuade several persons to voice their assessments and to propose policies. 3) Encourage those with dissenting views to present a different assessment.... The [Israeli Foreign MinistryQs] policy is based on gagging people and choking all different thoughts.... The response to the cable [by Israeli Consul-General in Boston] Nadav Tamir constituted a clear message to hundreds of Israeli diplomats. This is a warning: This is sheer intellectual terrorism. WeQll all pay the price for this in the future.

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